

PROCEEDINGS

OF

A MEETING OF THE CITIZENS OF NASHVILLE, TENN.,

In favor of Recognising the Independence of Texas.

JUNE 27, 1836.

Read, and ordered to be printed.

TEXAS MEETING IN NASHVILLE.

In pursuance of public notice previously given, by a call signed by a large number of highly respectable citizens of Nashville and Davidson county, a numerously attended public meeting of the citizens of this city and county convened at the court-house in Nashville, on Saturday, the 11th instant.

On motion of Colonel Willoughby Williams, seconded by H. R. W. Hill, Esq., the honorable John Catron was called to the chair, and Colonel S. H. Laughlin and E. H. Ewing, Esq., appointed secretaries.

On motion of Colonel Robert Weakley, the following resolution was adopted:

Resolved, That a committee of seven be appointed to take into consideration and report forthwith such measures and resolutions as they may believe to be proper to be adopted by the present meeting.

Whereupon, the chairman appointed Colonel Robert Weakley, Rev. James Gwin, Luke Lea, jr., Esq., Francis McGavock, Esq., Major John Boyd, Colonel Robert H. McEwen, and Colonel S. H. Laughlin, to be of the said committee.

The committee reported that they had had the subject referred to them under consideration, and thereupon presented the following

PREAMBLE AND RESOLUTIONS.

That, as early as the year 1821, the then Republic of Mexico invited emigrants from the United States to settle in the province of Texas, then a wilderness, overrun by various tribes of Indians, whom the Government either wanted the will or power to hold in subjection, and to whose warlike and marauding spirit the border towns and settlements of Mexico were, and for a great many years had been, constant objects of murder and plunder. To overcome this long-existing evil, a population was sought capable of subduing, and, in effect, conquering the country from the savage foes of the Mexican claimants. They had no people fitted for the object. By colonization laws and contracts, strong inducements were held out to emigrants from these United States, and liberal donations in

lands made, worthless, however, to Mexico, as are ours to us west of the Rocky mountains. Those who governed had seen, in their day, the savage of the valley of the Mississippi conquered, and its forests give way to the Western rifleman as the harvest to the sickle; and they wisely calculated that the same results would attend the employment of similar means. The consequence was, that from 1821 to 1835, there were drawn from the United States to the province of Texas some seventy thousand of our citizens, who permanently settled there, and this under the strongest legal guaranties for the protection of life, liberty, and property.

In 1824, the Federal constitution of the Mexican States was adopted, ours being taken for a model. State constitutions were adopted, in substance the same as our own. The spirit of freedom was then truly abroad; and the power and influence of the monarchists, sustained by the priests, but lately armed with the terrible authority of the inquisition, were overwhelmed. The tyrant's will and the inquisition were no more; and he who, for centuries, had been a degraded out-cast and slave, scourged by the Spaniard like the beast of the field, the Mexican native, was admitted to the enjoyment of a portion of his political rights. Our institutions were studied and imitated; our statesmen sought and consulted; our people were caressed; the migratory and restless temper of our Western population was encouraged, and, by the most seductive means, they were induced to abandon their own country, in large numbers, and settle in Texas. Contracts for the settlement of families, in numbers of from one hundred to eight hundred, were made with almost any of our citizens who would apply for the privilege, the contractor receiving large bounties in lands for his exertions and agency in furnishing the settlers. These contractors, denominated *empresarios*, were Government agents, and, as such, set forth the institutions of the country as highly just, free, and liberal: and so, indeed, were they at that period. Under these sanctions was Texas settled; and had the Federal and State constitutions continued in force, no cause, on the part of the colonists, would have existed for a change of Government. But the bland yet insidious means which once made the Jesuits masters of Spanish America, had again brought into the ascendant the party of the priests and monarchists. They seduced to their interest General Santa Ana, the most popular military chief of the opposite party; and, by a successful battle, the Federal Government was seized upon, and in May, 1834, suppressed by a *military* order. A new Congress was decreed by the dictator and his party to assemble, arbitrarily made up of their friends, which acted as the instrument of the usurpers, registering and issuing, in its own name, the military orders dictated to it. These, they were pleased to denominate decrees. The State Governments continued nominally to exist until October, 1835, when, by a decree of the self-constituted Congress, they were suppressed, and a central system was founded on their ruin, consolidating the Mexican States into a single military despotism, with Santa Ana and his army its Government, and his will its law.

Against this usurpation, the Legislature of Coahuila and Texas had the boldness to protest. A military force was sent to dissolve it. The Governor, Secretary of State, several members of Assembly, and others who took part with them, were seized and imprisoned. Amongst them was Colonel Milam, of Texas, who made his escape from prison, and fled to

Austin's colony. A military order was issued, to deliver up this distinguished citizen to General Cos. This was disregarded. The colonists openly, but peaceably declared for the Federal party and the constitution. This and the refusal to surrender Colonel Milam, gave offence to the dictator, and those subservient to him; and in October, 1835, a decree of the Central Congress at Mexico was issued, commanding that the citizens of Texas be disarmed, "*leaving only one gun to every five hundred inhabitants,*" and General Cos was ordered to carry this decree into execution.

The most refined and studied despotism could not have devised a more cruel insult. To a people dependent to a great extent upon the rifle for subsistence, and who were surrounded by the most powerful and warlike nations of Indians on this continent, who, had the colonists been disarmed, would have slaughtered them like the helpless herd, and exterminated the colony without giving the party of the dictator further trouble, nothing could be more shocking than to be deprived of their arms. The consequence need hardly be told. Instant and universal revolt followed of course. The colonists, with the proscribed rifles in their hands, met General Cos midway. Storming the garrison of Goliad, in their onward march, they encountered him on the 4th of December, at San Antonio, stormed the citadel, and made him and his army prisoners of war, whom they generously sent home with their arms on parole. Thus far the colonists were contending for their constitution.

But Santa Ana and his Congress decreed the Texians traitors and outlaws—the parole of General Cos and his army was treacherously broken, and joined to a large military force commanded by Santa Ana in person. This army marched upon Texas with the avowed determination of putting to death all taken in arms, and opposed to it. Such was the precise order of the Central power: and it was executed at the taking of the Alamo, and on the unfortunate companions of Fanning, and on many others, with a treachery and horrid cruelty almost exceeding belief; furnishing evidence, true as it is melancholy, that the Mexican is still a savage, and unfit to govern civilized men. This the colonists had been for a time taught, and it is well we have learned that the Mexican is treacherous and cruel. He is our next neighbor upon our great Indian and slave border; and it need not be concealed here, because it is not concealed in the Congress of the United States, that his vicinity to the valley of the Mississippi is, on all accounts, to be deprecated.

Thus situated, the people of Texas had the alternative presented, either to abandon the country, or to defend it. It was their home, and they chose the latter. But to do this, organization, a government, was necessary. A convention was, without dissent, determined upon, as the proper tribunal to take into consideration the condition of the country. By previous concert, the mode of election and number of members was determined. The election took place, and the convention met on the first day of March last.

The Government of Mexico had decreed, by a solemn law, that those who had taken up arms in Texas were traitors, and subject to be shot. This judgment of death included all but the women and children. Of the mode and extent of its execution, the convention had had awful warning; and they took the only step left to their choice; they declared

Texas a sovereign, independent Republic, published a formal declaration of independence, honestly and truly setting forth not only the propriety, but the absolute necessity of the act.

They next proceeded to adopt a constitution and form of Government, pursuing that of the United States, with slight exceptions: and the constitution provides for the administration of the Government until the elections to fill the Legislature, and the offices, shall take place during this summer. The necessary officers, in the mean time, were appointed by the convention, who are now administering the Government with more regularity, and with fairer prospects of its perpetuation, than did the authorities of these United States, for the first five years after our declaration of independence; or, than did a majority of the States from July, 1776, up to the capture of Cornwallis at York. Long before that event, our independence had been recognised by France and Holland. And were the Republic of the United States to refuse to recognise Texas as independent of Mexico, we would but too justly deserve the vindictive imputation so constantly cast upon us by the monarchists of the old world—that Republics are selfish and heartless, mindful of their interests alone, and destitute of noble and generous enthusiasm in the cause of human liberty. We repeat, the refusal to allow Texas the right of self-government would afford sanction to this withering and unjust reproach.

When the United States recognised the independence of the Mexican and South American Republics, not one of them had either as regular a government, or as fair prospects of perpetuating their new institutions, as has the Republic of Texas, since the battle of San Jacinto. Her enemy is conquered or flying the country, the timid Mexican soldier has lost all confidence and courage; and it is an indubitable truth, that Texas, with the credit which her vast public domain gives her, can command the men and the money, not only to defend herself, but, should the war continue, to plant her eagles on the citadel of Mexico. It is useless to close our eyes to obvious facts. Texas, in spite of the utmost good faith in the execution of treaties, by which we hope this Government will always be distinguished, will draw from these States the means of conquering her enemy.

Every man in the Union has the undoubted right to emigrate to Texas if he chooses. This is lawful. Our citizens may vest a hundred millions in Texas cotton and sugar lands—far superior to any other on this continent. Who, or what is to prevent them? To do so is lawful. This is not all. There are cases where laws and treaties are as cobwebs in the way of the torrent of popular passion and will. Such a case the Mexican Government had the wickedness to present by the cold-blooded and inhuman slaughter of the defenders of the Alamo, and the treacherous butchery and burning of Colonel Fanning's men, prisoners of war on capitulation. Before these acts of savage cruelty, many, perhaps most of our orderly citizens stood, not indifferent, but inactive spectators of the contest; but afterwards, it is useless to pretend that men, money, and arms, were not almost openly furnished, as if the war had been our own. The laws of God, of man, and of all civilized nations, had been outraged—our people felt all legal and moral obligations cancelled, and viewed the Mexicans as they did pirates on the seas—ene-

mies to all mankind. This was equally true in every part of the United States. Few inquired for the law, and fewer still regarded it, as there were none to enforce obedience. So the matter now stands, and so it must continue.

With a restless and migratory population of young men, whose physical prowess and romantic and chivalrous daring have even excelled the trained Indian warrior, when tested hand-to-hand, of whom the valley of the Mississippi can furnish, perhaps, one hundred thousand, ready to embark in any enterprise promising to be fraught with stirring adventures, what but peace is to prevent an army from Texas marching on Mexico—a city which is now, more than in a former age, possessed of those fatal charms that once tempted the Spaniard to her ruin?

The project has in it more of romantic attractions to daring ambition than any presented since the days of Pizarro and Cortes. Who fears successful resistance? The European Spaniards have been cut off or driven from the country by the Mexican revolution. The Mexican native never could fight, nor has he a motive; he of the mixed blood is no soldier, and the creole a most indifferent one. Before an army made up of the *materiel* supposed, Mexico would fall without a struggle. This it is the business of the United States to prevent; and it can only be prevented by recognising the claim of Texas to be severed from Mexico, and an interference to end the war. With such interference we have strong assurances Mexico herself would rest content. The thing must be so in the end, and the sooner the better for all interested. But suppose Texas has reverses: the idea of permitting Mexico to overcome her, and of us standing tamely by, to see our sons and daughters, sisters and brothers put to the sword and exterminated from the country, after having been anxiously invited there, is abhorrent; it is a test we hope Congress or the Executive will not put us to: it is not in our nature to permit it; and we implore Congress to believe—‘this thing must not be.’

We have heard some persons doubt of the propriety of recognising the independence of Texas during the present session of Congress. They say the change in Texas has been so sudden, and so recent. This is the very case where, if men *doubt*, they should act. Interest and patriotism concur that there should be no delay. Precedents are at hand. So France acted with us; so Holland acted with us. That Governments are suddenly changed, is nothing new; and that a successful battle decides their fate, is most common. The change that recently severed Belgium from Holland was produced in four days. We recognised Belgium. The revolution that changed the Government of France, and placed Louis Philippe on the throne, was the work of three days. We instantly recognised the new dynasty.

The revolution that overthrew the late Republic of Mexico, and founded on its ruins the present central military despotism, was the work of a single battle. Our minister to the deposed republic was continued; we delayed not a moment to recognise General Santa Ana’s new government. And why not republican Texas likewise? She, too, has won her liberty by a successful battle, conclusive as any since the days of Pharsalia. Surely we are not indifferent to the noble daring that guarded the flying women and children of Texas from a foe that left San Felipe, Harrisburg, and the whole country a smouldering ruin, regardless

of social duty as the Cossac or the Creek!—nor forgetful of the liberty won by that small band of our countrymen, whose pre-eminence it is to have conquered the chief and the army that butchered the troops of Fanning and the defenders of the Alamo! Because they are our countrymen their claims are not the less. Other reasons exist why the United States should recognise the independence of Texas before the rise of Congress, *and why further steps should be taken in reference to that country*, not necessary to be stated here.

Resolved, therefore, That, in the opinion of this meeting, the Republic of Texas is severed from Mexico; that she has a Government, in fact, in successful operation, republican in its character, and which she has abundant means to maintain; that no good reason exists why the Congress and Executive Government of the United States should not immediately recognise the independence of the Republic of Texas.

2. *Resolved*, That, in the opinion of this meeting, the present session of Congress should not be permitted to close until the independence of Texas is fully recognised, and every arrangement made with the new government consistent with the best interests of the United States. And this meeting hereby petitions the Executive and the Congress of the United States to give effect to these our wishes; and especially in recognising, in the most unequivocal terms, Texas as severed from Mexico, and that she is a free, sovereign, and independent state.

3. *Resolved*, That the Executive of the United States, and our Senators and Representatives in Congress from the State of Tennessee, are most respectfully requested to use their best exertions to give effect to our petition and wishes as expressed in these proceedings. That twenty copies thereof be furnished to the President of the United States, and five copies to each Senator and Representative in Congress, signed as originals by the chairman and secretaries of this meeting.

4. *Resolved*, That the proceedings of this meeting be signed by the chairman, and countersigned by the secretaries, and published in all the newspapers in the State of Tennessee; and that five hundred copies be printed in the form of handbills for the convenience of immediate circulation.

The question was then put severally upon the adoption of the preamble and resolutions, when they were separately adopted by a *unanimous vote*.

The meeting then adjourned.

J. CATRON, *Chairman*.

S. H. LAUGHLIN, }
E. H. EWING, } *Secretaries.*



